

## **Street Children: Contested Identities and Universalizing Categories**

**Lazima Onta-Bhatta**

The Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), a Nepali non-governmental organization conducted a survey of 100 street children in 1990, and claimed that there were 500 such children in Kathmandu (CWIN 1990). In 1993, three years after the first survey, CWIN claimed that this figure had increased by three times and reached 1500 (Pradhan 1993). At the same time, CWIN also claimed that the number of street children nation-wide in Nepal was 5000. Since these figures were publicized in 1993, they have been quoted over and over again by the media and the development organizations working with children, and have now become hard facts. These figures were, however, only educated guesses based upon CWIN's survey of 908 street children conducted between January and June 1993 in Kathmandu (Pradhan 1993). In 1995, the Police Headquarters interviewed and photographed 700 street children and claimed that the total number of street children in Kathmandu was between 700 and 800 (Kunwar 1995b). The figures that CWIN generated in 1993 have, however, remained popular and plausible, and interestingly enough, they have not increased in the last two and a half years.

What do these figures represent? Who are the street children? And why such a concern from the development organizations and the state over a specific group of children in the 1990s? This paper analyzes how different conceptions about street children have evolved in Nepal, and how various actors such as the state, development organizations, the media, and the street children themselves have contributed to the processes of creating and consolidating street children's identities.<sup>1</sup> While certain conceptions are meant to locate Nepali street children within internationally established categories, others are meant to create a shared local identity among the Nepali street children. These generalizing conceptions are created by the state, the media, child development organizations, and child rights activists in the processes of designing policies and programs, raising public awareness on child rights, and making the situation of the street

---

1 Research for this paper was conducted from July 1994 to August 1995. All translations are mine. The names of child informants have been changed.

children visible to the rest of the society. Such attempts to give meaning to the realities of the street children have, however, not been sensitive to the differences among the street children or to their perceptions of themselves. The street children contest these generalizing categories for blurring the differences among them, resent them for demeaning their very existence, but also utilize them to take advantage of immediate circumstances for long or short-term personal gains.

In this paper I have traced the history of the identities of the street children in Nepal over the past few decades. In the first section I examine how the phenomenon of begging and the child beggars were perceived before street children's issues became popular among the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the state in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Using newspaper sources and research reports, I point out that beggary was viewed as a socially and morally degrading activity with the potential to gradually transform the beggars into criminals. It was because of this perception that the state and the social welfare sector were concerned with turning the child beggars into productive citizens.

In the second section I look into how new forms of labeling the street children have developed in Nepal within the last decade. The first part of this section focuses on the roles of the international and local development organizations in uncritically importing the universalizing definitions of the street children and hence contributing to the globalization of certain notions of childhood. The second part emphasizes how the local term *khāte*, originally created by the street children themselves, has been established as an undifferentiated category for all street children in Nepal through its deliberate use by the NGOs and the media. Using ethnographic information I argue here that the generalized identity represented by the term *khāte* is resented and rejected by the street children themselves as it now stands for being dirty, dangerous, and degrading.

In the third section, I analyze the processes involved in constructing and appropriating street children's identities, and highlight their links with urban consumerism, morality of the socially dominant groups, and the state's project to construct "good citizens". I conclude by suggesting some larger lessons this study offers for future anthropological research on Nepal.

### **CHILD BEGGARS: THE EARLIER AVATAR OF STREET CHILDREN**

Earlier references to underprivileged children in Nepal use different terms such as *garīb* (poor), *anāth* (orphan), *asahāya* (guardianless and

helpless), *magante* or *māgne* (beggars), and *bewārise* (abandoned or neglected) (Gorkhāpatra 1994 v.s.; International Child Year Committee Nepal 1979). Although these terms have overlapping meanings and the categories are not exclusive, each also refers to a particular set of characteristics. Among these categories, the orphans have received the most attention of the society, and orphanages were established in the Kathmandu Valley by governmental (e.g. Bal Sangathan in 1966), non-governmental (e.g. Paropakar in 1952), and international organizations (e.g. S.O.S. Children's Village in 1971). The urban society was, however, far from sympathetic towards those who begged for a living including children. Beggary was considered to be counterproductive, demeaning, and undesired in the moral order of things, and efforts were made by the state to curtail beggary.

Writings from the government Nepali newspaper *Gorkhāpatra* provide insights into the popular conception towards child beggars in the 1930s and 1940s in Kathmandu. The following two incidents, written up and submitted by "an experienced person" were quoted in a *Gorkhāpatra* editorial in 1994 v.s. [1937] that addressed the issue of defining the poor who deserved charity:

It's been about a month. A boy of about 12 to 14 years of age came begging to my door. I saw him eating uncooked rice. He was in rags. I felt pity for him. I called him, and slowly started talking to him. When I asked why he had not gone to this season's planting work, he said - 'they make us work all day and pay only three *ānās* [12 paisā], so why should I go?' I got very angry. I called him a thief, a cheat. I told him to leave but he didn't and continued begging money from me. In the end, I paid for my mistake and gave him one paisā (*Gorkhāpatra* 1994 v.s., Sāun 15th).

Although I had just been cheated a few days ago, I fell into another scam. There was an orphaned Damai girl who is five or six years old in Kathmandu. She had an infected wound on her head filled with pus and bugs. She had a piece of bread (*selrotī*) in her mouth. When I saw her, I felt pity. I decided to treat her wound. So I called her and took her home. I gave her a bed, and systematically treated her wound picking the bugs one by one. I made all other necessary arrangements. But I could not make her stay under my control for a week even after pleading with her many times. She did not wish to stay with me because she had to follow rules for eating and other things. She had already mastered the art of begging. She went back to where she was. She is still in Kathmandu, and whenever I see her, she smiles and says 'give me a paisā ...' (*Gorkhāpatra* 1994 v.s., Sāun 15th).

Both child beggars in the above incidents are portrayed as undeserving of charity although they are depicted as poor and in need of care.<sup>2</sup> Beggary is conceived as a morally wrong activity; beggars are cheaters who take from the society without contributing anything. Another editorial in 1999 v.s. [1942] enhanced this conception:

Nowadays the boys who begged and slept in the corners of *pātīs* have disappeared due to the good arrangements by the police. Instead of alms, they are getting meals from the police department. In the rise of Shree 3 Maharaja, there are many factories and work for those without work; there are alms (*sadābarta*) for the disabled, yogis, and sanyasis. So, what is the need to beg? The concept of begging in the name of religion with golden earrings dangling from the ears cannot be supported (*Gorkhāpatra* 1999 v.s., Bhadra 17th).

Although it is not clear how exactly the police dealt with the beggars, it is evident that beggary was condemned and work was celebrated. This moralizing has also guided the conceptual differentiation between child beggars and child workers found in research studies carried out in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the early 1970s, the Zonal Commissioner's Office of Bagmati Zone and UNICEF sponsored a study of beggars in the Kathmandu Valley. This study consisted of interviews with a total of 780 beggars out of which 149 were children under the age of 15 (Okada and Rana 1973). It defined beggars as those who "made their living by directly begging for alms for at least the past three months continuously", and "all destitute people who received *hundi*<sup>3</sup> whether or not they begged for alms" (ibid:1). This study emphatically distinguished beggars from people who provided various services and received money or something else in return. It clearly stated that

No interviews were carried out among those who offered a service of some kind, e.g. guarding parked cars, carrying baggage, 'guiding' tourists, playing musical instruments, etc. To cite two examples, no Gaine (hereditary bards) were interviewed unless they were directly

---

2 The rhetoric of "lazy criminal street people" versus "the deserving poor" has prevailed in the treatment of the homeless people in the United States. See Wright 1989 for a critique of stereotypes of homeless people and homelessness in America.

3 Okada and Rana define *hundi* as a regular food or cash grant from private, quasi-government and religious charitable organizations (1973:1). The correct transliteration is *haṇḍī*.

begging and not singing for alms, and no beggars were interviewed at Tribhuvan Airport where earning tips through watching parked cars or carrying baggage is more prevalent than direct begging (Okada and Rana 1973:1).

Hence, begging was not considered as work although it enabled many children to support themselves and their families. This differentiation between work and begging is also obvious in a survey sponsored by the Underprivileged Children's Education Program (UCEP), a Danish organization which was invited by the Nepali Government in 1979 to conduct a pilot project combining general education and vocational skill training for the underprivileged children. This survey aimed to estimate the number and to study the socio-economic condition of working children in the Kathmandu Valley. It excluded child beggars and focused only on working children who were defined as

those children who are engaged in some form of work which directly or indirectly provides economic benefits to the child/or the family. Thus, children working as domestic servants, hotel boys, labourers, shoe shiners, petty traders (selling things to tourists and others), tourist guides, porters and family occupation followers are considered as working children. Labourers include those children working on a wage basis, and domestic servants include those working in shops, mills and workshops (UCEP 1979:9).

Although this study acknowledged that child beggars worked because they supported themselves or assisted their families, it did not include child beggars among the 2066 working children between the ages of 8 and 14 that the survey interviewed because begging was defined as "work in a negative sense in that they take from rather than contribute to society." UCEP gave priority to "children who work in a positive way" (ibid:viii).

The contrast between children's work and the act of begging was also influenced by ideologies of *samāj sudhār* or social improvement. Begging by adults was criminalized in 1961 by the *Bhikṣa Māgne Niṣedh Ain* 2018 v.s. [Beggary Prohibition Act 1961] which was one of the many laws passed by the Panchayat state under the rhetoric of *samāj sudhār*.<sup>4</sup>

4 Other laws were the *Muluki Ain* 2020 v.s. that prohibited polygamy, child marriage, and caste discriminations, *Juwā Ain* 2020 v.s. [Gambling Prohibition Act], *Bhumi Sudhār Ain* 2021 v.s. [Land Act], *Ciṭṭā Ain* 2025 v.s. [Lottery Act], *Madirā Ain* 2031 v.s. [Alcohol Act], *Lāgu Auśadhī Nīyantraṅ Ain* 2033 v.s. [Drug Control Act], and *Samājik Vyavahār Sudhār Ain* 2033 v.s. [Social Customs Improvement Act].

This Act was based upon the premise that beggary had to be prohibited in order to "maintain the good will (*sadācār*) and morality of the general public" (*Bhikṣa Māgne Niṣedh Ain*: Preamble). It clearly stated that anyone above the age of 16 was prohibited to beg, to take alms, and to encourage others to give alms, and that offenders would be penalized. It also prohibited adults from making any child (everyone under the age of 16) beg or take alms. Any adult or the guardians of the children who involved them in begging was to be penalized. This Act, however, was silent on children begging on their own.<sup>5</sup>

The Children's Vocational Centre (*Bāl Vyavasāyi Kendra*) in Siphel, Kathmandu was already established in 2026 v.s. [1969] "to give vocational training to orphaned beggar children from the streets" (New Era 1983:49). By 1979, child beggars were perceived as a "constantly occurring social problem" (International Child Year Committee Nepal 1979:23), and plans to deal with them were emphasized. It was reported that during 1979, 30 child beggars were placed in various child welfare institutions, and others found begging on the streets were taken to their parents as part of the effort to discourage begging and to provide care for such children (*ibid*).

Beggary continued to be perceived as a social evil necessary to be contained and uprooted in order to maintain and enhance moral order in the society. A study of child beggars from Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Janakpur and Pokhara was carried out in the fiscal year 2039/40 v.s. [1982/83] by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The objectives of the study were to explore the social, economic and physical conditions of the child beggars, to examine if beggary had developed into a profession for these children, and to propose policy recommendations for programs necessary to improve their lives (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare 2039:3). The concern for social improvement and making good citizens out of the child beggars remained central to the rationale for this study:

[T]he habit of begging developing in these children is a result of the social environment. The future of these children along with the future of the county is hidden in these young children. *It is a proven fact that if the number of child beggars and the process of urbanization continue*

---

5 Wasti has, however, reported that the records on crimes committed by children collected from the Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Police, the District Courts, and the District Offices of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur in 2035 v.s.[1978], include 4 children arrested for begging (2036 v.s.:53). Hence, in practice, the *Bhikṣa Māgne Niṣedh Ain* criminalized children as well.

*to grow simultaneously in our society, various kinds of social degeneration and depravity [vikriti ra vikār] will arise.* In order to take necessary steps towards preventing such negative impacts on the society, it is deemed timely to deal with the problem of child beggars today although they are not yet a serious problem (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare 2039:7, emphasis added).

While beggary is obviously denounced by this study (which included interviews with 168 child beggars between the ages of 5 and 14) alternative income generating activities such as domestic service or hotel assistance are perceived as "good work" (*rāmro kām*) (ibid:21). It also claims that the working children are less likely to produce social vice and depravity (*vikār ra vikriti*) than child beggars (ibid:12). Hence begging is considered to be not only socially and morally demeaning but also potentially dangerous to the society. The study in fact maintains that among the 168 interviewees, 118 children who were 11 or older in age must be considered as a group physically able to work (ibid:13), and it suggests that "if jobs appropriate for the age and skills of the child beggars were created, their profession could be changed and they could be involved in the productive sector" (ibid:27). Okada and Rana's earlier study also points out that among the 149 children, "at least 33 child beggars are old enough and fit enough to work" (1973:5). When UCEP was invited by the Nepali government to carry out the pilot project on integrated general and vocational education, it was meant "to give children between the ages of 8 to 14 years of age, non-starters and school drop-outs alike, a chance to start schooling or resume schooling *without interfering with their work or earning capacity*" (UCEP1979:vii, emphasis added).

In the studies on children discussed above, work is valued as socially and morally good while begging is portrayed as a socially unacceptable activity which functions as a breeding ground for criminals. Children's work in the urban service sector is in fact recommended by these studies as a way of eliminating child beggars, and inculcating a work ethic in these children. Other research projects on children in the 1970s also pointed out that children's work input had positive economic value to their parents and also provided old-age security (e.g. Nag, et. al. 1978). Driven by the morality that placed work over and above begging, the research on child beggars and working children failed to see the exploitation, hard work, and long working hours that the children were subjected to when they were employed in the urban service sector.

One of the jobs that the research called "good work" was working in small restaurants in the cities about which the government daily newspaper reported the following in 1979: "The owners of the small and medium size restaurants in Kathmandu have employed children between the ages of 10 and 14 for rupees 30 to 70 per month. The children said that they work for 16 hours everyday from 5 in the morning to 9 at night, but are neither paid enough nor fed well by the restaurant owners" (*Gorkhāpatra* 2036 v.s., Asad 15). In addition to the restaurant work, other menial jobs such as domestic service and shoe shining done by children in the urban service sector, and the various kinds of agriculture-related jobs that rural children had to perform were criticized by K. C. as exploitation of child labor (K. C. 2036 v. s.). The Nepal Factory and Factory Workers Act 2016 v.s. [1959] had prohibited children under 14 from being employed or made to work in factories, while those between the ages of 14 and 18 were allowed to work only during the hours of 6am to 6pm. However, the issue of child labor visibly entered the political and development debates only in the 1990s.

Many of the child beggars in the studies discussed above lived on the street, in *pāṭī*<sup>6</sup> or at temples, and all the children spent a significant part of their time on the street as required by begging (Okada and Rana 1973:19; Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare 1982:31). Those child beggars had much in common with many of the street children today in Kathmandu, Narayanghat, Dharan, and Pokhara in terms of their social groups, interactions, mobility, begging practices, and types of shelter used. However, the street was not conceived in the early 1970s and 1980s as the space where child beggars lived their lives, and hence they were only identified as beggars and not as street children. A more engaging account of the child beggars and their street lives in Kathmandu is found in a Nepali short story written in 1963 by Ramesh Bikal, a notable Nepali literary figure. Bikal portrays the daily activities, survival strategies, group interaction, and aspirations for social mobility of the orphaned child beggars within the context of their everyday lives on the streets of Kathmandu (Bikal 2025 v.s.). Unlike researchers, Bikal does perceive the street as the space where child beggars not only sought their means of living, but also created social relationships and emotional

---

6 A *pāṭī* is a temporary shelter for pilgrims, travellers, etc. It has a floor, a roof and at most, three walls so that at least one side is always open. Some *pāṭī* are open on all sides with just four posts supporting a roof (Okada and Rana 1973:18).



attachments. Hence the importance of the street in the child beggars' identities as "footpath ministers" in Bikal's story.

A different perspective on the children who begged and lived on the street in Kathmandu in the 1950s was presented by a retired Nepali Army General in his sixties. He told me in August 1995 that he had met a boy in Durbar Square, Kathmandu sometime around 1957-58. This boy was about eight or nine years old, and was from my informant's village in Kavrepalanchok. At the time, this boy was living on the street and begging for a living. Since my informant knew that the boy's father had been looking for him, he took him back to the village; but the boy ran away from home later. Recalling the 1950s in Kathmandu, my informant said:

there were children in Kathmandu from the neighboring districts who had run away from home. They used to live in groups and sleep in the *pātīs* especially in Chhauni, Hanumandhokha, and Swayambhu. They used to beg in the streets, or eat the food thrown away especially during feasts. Because they ate from the rubbish, they were called *cyāme* or *poḍe*<sup>7</sup> according to the social structure of the time. They became *cyāme* or *poḍe* when they grew up. I knew a sweeper in the Nepali Army who was actually a Magar man. He had left his home when he was little and had lived in the streets of Kathmandu begging and eating from the rubbish. He hence became a *cyāme*, and he later married a woman from the *poḍe* community.

This account suggests that the logic used behind labeling the children who begged and lived on the streets was caste-based which placed such children at the bottom of the caste hierarchy.

Beggary and street living have hence been looked upon as socially degrading, non-productive, and morally wrong phenomena for decades by the urban elites and the state. Beggars and others who live in the street depend on the public space for everyday living, and hence make themselves visible to the rest of the society. This visibility significantly contributes to characterizing beggary and street living as breeding grounds for future criminals by the state and the socially dominant groups. It is, however, important to point out that the street was not linked with the identity of the child beggars until the late 1980s although a significant part of their lives was street-based. This was perhaps because the street

---

7 *Cyāme* or *poḍe* is the untouchable group in the caste hierarchy whose caste profession is sweeping and collecting trash.

was still viewed as a friendly public space where children, even from middle class families, played<sup>8</sup> and adults socialized. The streets have changed from being such social places to sources of violence, crime, and immorality in the urban middle-class world view. Hence the child beggars, and many other children who live or work on the streets today are called *saḍak bālbalikā* or street children. This change, however, is more than just terms. It is a reflection of the urbanity of Kathmandu which is significantly influenced by the dominant groups' morality and consumption practices. I discuss these issues in the last section.

### **CONSTRUCTING NEW CATEGORIES: STREET CHILDREN, NGOS, AND THE MEDIA**

Until the late 1980s, the term "street children" or its Nepali equivalent "*saḍak bālbalikā*" had not become part of the vocabulary of the child welfare sector in Nepal. Today, "street children" has become an established category representing a marginal group in the urban society. The development organizations, the media, the state, and the children who live on the street have contributed to the construction of this category in Nepal. However, the definition of street children still remains ambiguous and contested. The NGOs and the international development organizations working with street children are gradually adopting internationally accepted definitions of street children which categorize them into different groups depending on their relationship with their families and the street. The Nepali term *khāte* has, however, developed into a popular identity of all street children through its purposive use by the NGOs in their publications and activities, and through the representation of the street children in the media. The identity represented by the term *khāte* is, however, resented and rejected by certain street children.

#### **Local and Universal Definitions of Street Children**

Although there were a couple of programs established with the objective of providing various services such as shelter, vocational

---

8 The street outside our house in Thamel, Kathmandu was the playing ground for me and my brother where we played all kinds of team games with our friends during the 1970s. Today, this is certainly not allowed for children from the middle-class families in Kathmandu because the streets are physically much more crowded with people and vehicles, and the conception of the street has converted from being a friendly public space into a hostile, dangerous, and dirty one.

training, and education to the children who were found on the street,<sup>9</sup> it was only in the late 1980s that the plight of these children were discussed within the framework of human rights, social justice, and empowerment. The force behind this new social movement was Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN), an NGO started by a group of university students in January 1987. Struggling with many hindrances created by the Panchayat government,<sup>10</sup> CWIN continued to document the lives of child workers and the children who lived on the streets of Kathmandu through advocacy campaigns, research on children's issues, and publication of the magazines *Voice of Child Workers* in English and *Bālsarokār* in Nepali.

The concept of street children at the time when CWIN initiated its activities was limited to children "for whom the street had become their habitual abode" (CWIN 1989:12). The focus was on child ragpickers who collected recyclable goods such as plastic and metal, and sold them to the *kawāḍīs*—the junk collection centers. These ragpicking children called themselves *khāte*—a word that these children created themselves. Ashish, about nineteen or twenty years old, had spent eight to ten years as a ragpicker in Narayanghat and Kathmandu. When I interviewed him in December 1994 at the hostel for street boys run by Aarohan—a professional theater group in Kathmandu—where he had been living for a few months, he told me the following about the creation of the word *khāte*:

We, the friends who are now living in this hostel, created this term. We gave the name *khāte* because we used to earn so much but could not save any. We ate it all, spent it all. Because we did not save any from our earnings and ate it all up (*sabai khāera uḍāune*), we called ourselves *khāte*.

9 For example, the Association for the Children of Chhauni was started in December 1985 by Mr. Jean-Jacques Haye, a French citizen, who has been running a residential facility with education and vocational training for street boys since 1986. The Children's Vocational Centre in Siphel, Kathmandu was opened in 1969 with the objective of taking care of and giving vocational training to neglected children and child beggars found on the street.

10 CWIN was not allowed to officially register by the Social Service National Coordination Council (SSNCC) the coordinator of all non-governmental organizations until 1992. CWIN's interests in eliminating all forms of exploitation and oppression of children, and its methodological approach consisting of organized campaigns on the rights of the children, and publication of research studies on child labor was deemed inappropriate in light of the welfare ideology of the SSNCC. A more important factor behind this rejection was that the organizers of CWIN, during their time at the Tribhuvan University, were very active and visible members of the student political groups affiliated with the then banned communist party.

The *khāte* identity, according to Ashish, hinged upon doing ragpicking and spending all the earnings on food and fun. He added, however, that besides ragpicking, he and many other *khātes* then also did "*narāmro kām*", i.e., stealing, at night. A similar definition of *khāte* was reiterated by Ramesh, a street boy hanging out with his group of friends in Thamel, Kathmandu, to Dharma Adhikari who published an article in early 1993 in a Nepali monthly magazine after a month-long interaction with the *khāte* children:

Adhikari: So, why are you called *khāte*?

Ramesh: We called ourselves this. Later others started calling us *khāte* too. We sleep on the street. The street is our mother, the street is our father. All day long we do whatever job we find. If we don't find work, we go around begging for money with the tourist and other people. If we don't get anything even from begging, then we pickpocket, steal, and do all kinds of work that others make us do. But mostly we pick plastic [ragpick]. But no matter how much we work, we cannot earn; everything gets finished just by eating (*khādā khādai sidhdincha*). We are therefore called *khāte* (Adhikari 2049 v.s.:9).

The element of consuming all the money earned primarily by ragpicking remains central to this definition of a *khāte*.

The term *khāte* continued to be used in the publications produced by CWIN<sup>11</sup> to refer only to those street children who ragpicked. CWIN published a study based on a survey consisting of 100 street children in Kathmandu in 1990 (CWIN 1990). The study employed the following definition of street children: "Street children are those who use the street as their permanent homes, spending majority of their time out there doing whatever is necessary for their own day to day survival. Sometimes it also includes the support to the family" (ibid:1). The survey report maintained that a child who uses the street as a regular and permanent habitat may have the following characteristics depending on the degree of contact with their families (ibid:3):

---

11 CWIN has led the way in producing information on street and other children-at-risk in Nepal. Research, publication, and dissemination of information have been an important part of CWIN's mission. However, the use of English language in almost all of its publications until 1991, and the continued domination of English in research reports, posters and calenders produced for advocacy and dissemination of information defeats this purpose within Nepal.

- a. Survives in the street
- b. Has little or no family contact
- c. Has no adult care
- d. Involves in various antisocial activities including thieving, pickpocketing
- e. Basic needs unsatisfied
- f. Beggars or is subject to exploitation as a labourer
- g. Lives either alone or with those in similar positions
- h. Works as a *khāte* (slang for garbage, rag or plastic picker)
- i. Street smart on solving hassles with the police and out-witting other people

This set of characteristics, hence defined the street children who were categorized into three "types": runaway children, squatter children, and orphan or abandoned children (ibid:2-3). According to the definitions provided, the runaway children were the ones who had left their homes by themselves or with their friends to escape abuse, neglect, and hard lives whereas the orphan or abandoned children were those who had been "thrown out on the street by fate and cruelty to fend for themselves" (ibid). The squatter children spent their entire days working and playing on the streets but often returned to their homes in the poor and shanty areas in the city at night (ibid). One of the criteria for classifying children in these definitions is the degree of contact they have with their families; another being the relationship of the children to the street in terms of their work or other daily activities. In addition, the work that children do for survival—begging, *khāte* work, pickpocketing, stealing or other wage work—is also cast here as one of the defining characteristics of street children.

When CWIN's Nepali magazine *Bālsarokār* began to be published in early 1991, children's issues in general and those of working children in particular gained new momentum. Under the column called *Śram ra Jīvan* (labor and life), this magazine regularly documented individual stories of children working as domestic servants, vehicle conductors, shoe shiners, porters, and ragpickers. With regard to street children, this magazine mainly documented stories of ragpickers using the word *khāte* to refer to them and *khāte kām* to refer to their work. The second issue of *Bālsarokār* featured an article giving an overview of the *khāte* children. Explaining the meaning of the word *khāte* in Nepali, author Dhital, a member of the CWIN staff, wrote:

The children who pick up rubbish (*phohor tipne*) call themselves *khāte*. This word *khāte* is not a formal term, and it is not even in any dictionary. But it has a different meaning to these 'rubbish picking' children. '*Khāte* means one who is born to eat' they explain adding 'We live to work, and we work to eat. This means we live to eat'. Hence the word *khāte* has become the signifier of their identity, and is also very popular among such children (1991:36).

The term *khāte* continued to refer only to the street children who did ragpicking for a living until 1992. Inspired by the film *Salām Bombay* and the play *Jindagikī Gādi*, both about the lives of street children in Indian cities, a professional theater group in Kathmandu called Aarohan worked in collaboration with CWIN and staged *Khāte: Āwājbihīn Bālāpan* (*Khāte: A Voiceless Childhood*)—a play about the lives of *khāte* children by the *khātes* themselves—in August 1992. The play was based on the life stories of the children themselves, and was prepared without a script allowing the children to improvise their lines and use their own expressions.<sup>12</sup> The participating *khāte* children introduced themselves in the beginning telling the audience their real names, their family background, and how they became *khātes*. It continued to show various dimensions of street life of these children ranging from their work, play, and socialization into street life to the harassment by the police and local hooligans. Although this play was watched by a very small number of people at this time,<sup>13</sup> it has played a critical role in consolidating and

---

12 I observed the making of an expanded version of this play in August 1994 when Aarohan was preparing to stage it for the third time since its debut in 1992. All the participants were children and youth (between 16 and 21 years old) who lived or worked on the street. The main themes of the play had not changed from 1992, but lives of street children doing work other than ragpicking were also depicted although very briefly. Since there was no script, the scenes had to be recreated from scratch. The participating children and young adults shared their lived experiences, and scenes, characters and dialogues were created there and then to include these experiences in the play if they were perceived by the participants to be relevant to the general themes.

13 It was shown for 7 days (one show per day) in a small theater of the French Cultural Center in Kathmandu. On the day I watched it in August 1992, the hall was completely packed with about fifty people most of whom were friends of CWIN and Aarohan. This play was revised, expanded, and given a new title *Mahānagarkā Anāgarikharu* (Non-citizens of the Metropolis) in 1993, and shown many times in Kathmandu as well as in other cities. It was particularly acclaimed for its powerful presentation of street children's lives when it was shown during the Street Children's National Convention held in Kathmandu between October 11 and 13, 1993.

proliferating the *khāte* identity of the street children. Both Nepali and English local newspapers covered news about this play and its contents with photographs from the play itself as well as of street children sleeping on the street (e.g. Ankerson 1992; Bhattarai 2049 v.s.). The media has since played a significant role in shaping the popular conceptions about street children in Nepal.

The role of the media, was particularly important in 1993 when the Street Children's National Convention was held in Kathmandu for three days in October. The objectives of this convention as advertised by the Street Children's National Convention Organizing Committee were "to give a collective voice to children living on the streets of urban Nepal and to generate public awareness on their life styles, interests, concerns and rights"(The Rising Nepal 1993, September 24). Modeled after such conventions held previously in the Philippines and Brazil, it was organized by the Child Welfare Society (CWS). Financial assistance for this event was provided by UNICEF which, until August 1995, did not have any clear policies, plans and programs regarding its involvement in projects for the street children although it had been funding several such projects through local NGOs.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding its objectives, the politics between the various actors involved in organizing this convention and in street children's issues in general was captured in a short statement by a UNICEF staff member (the main liaison between UNICEF and local child NGOs) quoted in a local newspaper: "UNICEF supported a different organization because CWIN has been monopolizing children's issues" (G. Guragain, 1993). Obviously, street children had become yet another contested site for development work!

About 150 to 200 street children were gathered in Kathmandu for this convention. Street children from other cities such as Nepalgunj, Pokhara, Narayanghat, and Dharan were brought to Kathmandu for the occasion. The irony behind this effort to bring together street children from different cities was that the definition of a street child was not yet clear. The report of this convention uses terms like "homeless", "helpless", "*khāte*", "uncared", and "underprivileged" to qualify the term street children (CWS 1993). It also tends to categorize children into "hard core street children" and "those who work but do not sleep on the streets" (ibid). This categorization implies that children who only work on the street but live with their families are also street children echoing what CWIN called

---

14 Personal communication on August 4, 1995 with Daniel J. O'Dell, UNICEF Country Representative for Nepal.

squatter children in its survey in 1990 (CWIN 1990). Such family-based children were also counted as street children by a research team that had visited ten cities for a general assessment of the situation of street children before the Street Children's National Convention. The research team categorized the street children into two groups: 1) totally independent: those who live by themselves, and 2) staying at home: living with the family and, therefore, dependent (CWS 1993). No attempt was made to explain these categories and the underlying assumptions for such categorization. These categories, and the fact that both children living on the street and those living at home (but spending significant time on the street) were brought together for the Street Children's National Convention are evidence of UNICEF's attempt to conceptualize the street children in Nepal according to the definition it has used elsewhere.

Since the mid 1980s, UNICEF has disaggregated street children into two main categories: "children of the street" and "children on the street" based upon their current lifestyle and the degree of contact with their families (Tacon 1985). The "children of the street" are those "who have been pushed, or have themselves chosen, to lose almost all contact with their families, and have adopted the urban jungle as their home" and the "children on the street" are "those who spend a significant amount of time out on the streets beyond the supervision of a parent or other responsible adult, and spend some or all of it making money" (Black 1991:17-18). This broader definition of street children emerged from the definition provided by the Inter-NGO Committee on Street Children and Street Youth:

[A]ny girl or boy ... for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults (Inter-NGO Programme on Street Children and Street Youth 1985).

UNICEF's effort to universalize the terms "children of the street" and "children on the street" is reflected in its support for studies in various countries which utilized these categories.<sup>15</sup> In the context of Nepal, a situation analysis of street children was recently sponsored by UNICEF which provided guidelines emphasizing that the study was to include both "children of the street" and "children on the street". The guidelines

---

15 See NCSD 1989 and Black 1991 on the Philippines, Rizzini et al. 1992 on Brazil, and CWC 1992 on India.



presumed these categories to be distinct and exclusive which is far from the social reality of street children in Nepal (Onta 1995).

The concept of street children that UNICEF is universalizing is broader than the one used before which only referred to the children who lived on the street. This concept has also broadened the meaning of the street as well to include all public lands, buildings, temples, pavements, and *pāṭīs*. The links of the children with their families and the nature of the relationship of the children to the street that this concept emphasizes are crucial aspects to explore in street children's lives. However, the categories by themselves are not useful conceptually because the children placed in these categories move in and out, and between them all the time. Children who work and live on the streets spend time in shelters, in friends' rented rooms, and they go home occasionally. Children who work on the streets and usually live with their families occasionally spend a few days on the streets. And children who work in hotels or restaurants, or in private homes live in the streets when they are in between jobs. This constant movement of children problematizes any sort of categorization because categories tend to imply fixity and immobility of those placed in them. These categories have to be open, inclusive and fluid if they are to represent the social reality of the street children. The separation of street children in these categories hence only suggests that at any given time, there are children with different kinds of relationships with the street culture, with their families and with their peers. Children's relationships with their families and with the street are different when they are living in the street, and when they are only working there but living with their families. This difference is important to understand when policies and programs are to be designed to positively impact the lives of the children.

Today, the NGOs working for the street children have adopted the definition UNICEF has established. But there are no separate Nepali terms for the two categories, and the term *saḍak bālbālikā* is used to refer to both. The term *khāte*, however, has evolved into a synonym for street children or *saḍak bālbālikā*, referring to all street children notwithstanding their work, family ties, or where they live. The popularity of the term *khāte* increased significantly after the Street Children's National Convention which attracted significant coverage in the media.<sup>16</sup> The

16 See Adhikari 2050 v.s.; Banskota 2050 v.s.; Swastika Bhattarai 1993; Gorkhapatra 2050 v.s., Asoj 26; Gorkhapatra 2050 v.s., Asoj 29; G. Guragain 1993; L. Guragain 1993; Janmabhumi 2050 v.s.; Kantipur 1993; Lumbini 2050 v.s.; Mahanagar 2050 v.s.; Nepal Times 2050 v.s.; Singh 1993; Sunday Despatch 1993; The Kathmandu Post 1993.

newspapers covering this event were primarily critical of it for being nothing more than a means of the organizing NGOs to earn dollars from UNICEF, and for UNICEF to show that it spent a certain amount on behalf of the street children in Nepal. The act of convening street children from different cities to raise public awareness of street children's issues was criticized as an unproductive activity so far as the welfare and development of the street children was concerned, for the Convention provided nothing but three days of food and fun to the street children who returned to the street on the fourth day. Keshab, who was one of the street children brought to Kathmandu for this occasion, summarized his experience of the convention in the following sentence when I met him in Dharan in May 1995: "I saw the play about the *khātes*, I ate good food, I did not study, and I got a new shirt."

It is through the critical media coverage it received that the Street Children's National Convention contributed to raising public awareness of issues concerning street children as well as the activities and politics of the NGOs and donor organizations involved in this sector. Since this event, children's issues in general and those of street children in particular have become regular "news items" in most of the local newspapers in Nepal.<sup>17</sup> Simultaneously, however, particular conceptions and images of the street children have become dominant, and the differences among the street children have been blurred with the use of the term *khāte* as an undifferentiated category for all street children.

### ***Khāte*: Collective Category, Contested Identity**

The issues regarding street children in urban Nepal have received a tremendous amount of attention from development organizations and the media in the last three years. The number of NGOs offering various programs to the street children have certainly increased.<sup>18</sup> In addition to

---

17 Articles on street children in other countries also appeared in the local newspapers. See Gorkhapatra 2050 v.s. Sāun 11 on street children in Brazil; The Rising Nepal 1993 August 6 for an article on Columbian street children; The Kathmandu Post 1994 September 9 for an article on street children in India.

18 Until August 1995, the following were the active NGOs in Kathmandu: Child Workers in Nepal (1987), Child Welfare Society (1991), Education Programme for Helpless Children (1990), People In Need Nepal (1992), Children-at-Risk Network Group (1992), Seto Gurans (1992), Association for the Children of Chhauni (1985), and a few other long-term residential programs that take in street children as well as other children in difficult circumstances. Underprivileged Children Association in Dharan and Narayanghat Youth Club in Narayanghat started drop-in centers for street children in 1994.

the print media, issues of the street children have also become popular in feature films and television movies.<sup>19</sup> A film called *Sadak*, produced by O. K. Films, was playing in the local theaters in Kathmandu in April 1995. This movie was acclaimed for "realistically portraying the lifestyle of the street children" (Naya Pusta 1994) and for introducing a new genre in Nepali films (Aseem 1994). It was advertised as "a film based on the sorrowful stories of the *khāte* children who have nobody and nothing except the sky as their blanket and earth as their bed" (Kantipur 1995, April 29). The movie, however, deals very little with street children's lives. Its central story revolves around the lives of three successful adults who were former street children. Although the message seems to be that street children can succeed in life if they get the opportunity to change their lifestyle, the movie shows very little about the complexity of street children's everyday reality, and the difficulties in their journey from home to the street as well as in their efforts to leave the streets. Since the main subject matter is not about street children's lives, this film took undue advantage of the *khāte* children for sensational publicity. The fact that the film was expected to be an effective medium to raise public awareness is an indication of the prominence of the issues of *khāte* children.

A documentary called *khāte* was made by the Police Headquarters in 1993. Through interviews with police officers, NGO personnel, street children, and the general public, this documentary attempts to present who *khātes* are, where they come from, why they come to the street, how they survive, and what kinds of crimes they commit. The focus is once again on the children who ragpick for a living and live on the street with an emphasis on showing that these children are involved in criminal activities such as stealing, pickpocketing, snatching, dealing drugs, harassing tourists and pedestrians, using obscene language and behaving indecently in public. The main message is that all *khātes* are criminals, and unless steps are taken to deal with them now, they will grow up to become dangerous criminals in the future. The documentary, however, only shows adult men pickpocketing in a crowded bus, and stealing clothes and money from a private home.

In early 1995, the Police Headquarters presented its plan of action to the representatives of the NGOs working with street children.<sup>20</sup> The

19 It was reported in 1995 that a television series entitled *Khāte* was almost complete (Kantipur 1995, March 17), and another five-part television movie about street children entitled *Mukti* (freedom) had just begun shooting (Kantipur 1995, March 22).

20 The plan consisted of collecting all the street children in Kathmandu in a police facility where they would be given hair cuts, baths, and a clean set of clothes, and

objective was to identify the magnitude of the population of street children and to "straighten up the lives of the street children in order to make them into good citizens" (Kunwar 1995a). The police was seeking support and collaboration from the NGOs, donor organizations, and government bodies to carry out this plan which Mr. Basant Kunwar, the police officer behind this scheme, called "*saḍak baḍhārne*" (street cleaning), i.e., taking the children off the streets.<sup>21</sup> The police had already started collecting data on street children by rounding them up, bringing them to the local police offices, filling out a standard questionnaire and taking their mug shots with their names or designated numbers appearing in front of them (like the standard mug shots of criminals or suspects). Based on information collected from 700 street children in Kathmandu by the police, Kunwar wrote an article in a Nepali daily newspaper emphasizing that most of the street children were either already involved in criminal activities or tended to be so after being on the street for some time (Kunwar 1995b). He maintained that criminal gangs will emerge in our neighborhoods in the near future unless initiatives are taken today to make arrangements for the street children's rehabilitation (ibid).

The notion that street children are prone to criminality and socially unacceptable behavior is one of the dominant popular conceptions about them in urban Nepali society today. The following are some of the responses I obtained from a public opinion survey conducted in early 1995 of people above age 16 in Kathmandu regarding their conception of the *khātes* and how *khātes* have affected other children and the society:

- (a) Theft, burglary, pickpocketing, snatching are all increasing in our society.
- (b) They dirty the streets with their urine and feces.
- (c) *Khātes* sleep wherever they want and hence cause problems for the pedestrians, shopkeepers, and tourists.
- (d) Other children learn obscene language, and dirty habits from the *khātes*.
- (e) *Khātes* destroy plants, vandalize signboards, break street lights, and disturb the neighborhood at night by quarreling and fighting with each other.
- (f) If there are too many *khātes*, there could be lack of security in the society.

---

kept under the supervision of the police. The social workers from the NGOs working with street children would interrogate these children to identify why they are on the street, and figure out ways to send them home, put them in schools, send them to children's homes, or place them in income-generating training programs.

21 Personal communication, February 9, 1995.

This conception of the *khātes* as "dirty" and "dangerous" includes street children of all kinds. It is because of this negative image in the society that street children who do not work as ragpickers reject the *khāte* identity given to them by the media, the NGOs, and the general public.

The street children in the Pashupati area of Kathmandu resent the *khāte* identity imposed on them by the media and the NGOs. These children are part of the working community that depends on the informal economy surrounding the Pashupati temple. Most of them earn their living by guarding shoes outside the temple, minding parked vehicles, washing parked cars and motorcycles, assisting shopkeepers in the area, and picking up money offered to the deities in the many small shrines within the Pashupati temple. Many of these street children live in the *pāṭīs*, or sleep on the platforms outside the main gate of the temple. When they assist in the flower shops outside the temple, the shopkeepers allow them to sleep on the benches that are used during daytime to display the puja commodities for sale. Some of the children who beg or work on the streets in this area live with their guardians in the public shelters (i.e. *pāṭīs*) surrounding the temple. I knew most of the street children and youth in this area through Education Program for Helpless Children (EPHC), a local NGO, which offered semi-formal classes up to the fourth grade to the street and underprivileged children in the area. Many of the street boys worked in the morning and attended classes at EPHC in the afternoon.

These street children and youth differentiated themselves by asserting that they are not *khātes* because they do not ragpick. Relating the incident when some of them were taken by the police to be interviewed during the data collection on *khāte* children in February 1995, one of the older boys told me: "The police took some boys yesterday to the Gaushala station. They were beaten and kept overnight. They took photographs and filled out forms. They thought the boys were *khātes*; but we are not *khātes* (*khāte bhanera lageko; hami khāte nai haina*)." So who are the *khātes*? A 14-year old boy, Sunil told me "*khāte* is the one who carries a sack and goes around picking plastic" i.e., the ragpickers. He also added: "*khātes* look down on us. We try to treat them as our friends because they are also sons of the poor and we are too. But they look down on us just like that." His friend Prabir, a 16 year old boy, added: "we don't steal" implying that *khātes* not only ragpick but also steal. Later both these boys confessed: "We only steal flowers. We steal flowers and sell them to the flower shops here in Pashupati. We have to do this sometimes to eat. But we don't pick pocket." Although some of the boys in this area had done

ragpicking before, they all looked down on it as a lower job because it involved dirt. The term *khāte* was associated only with the ragpicking work, and not with street living or the habit of spending all the earnings that other street children, journalists and the NGOs have emphasized. In a spontaneous group discussion I had with 12 boys in Pashupati in a cold winter morning in 1994, we discussed the term *khāte*:

Kishor: The journalists call us *khāte* too. When they write they call everybody *khāte*. We are not *khātes*. We guard shoes.

Ram: That's right. We don't go around picking plastic like the *khātes*. We guard shoes. It is not appropriate to call us *khāte* too.

Kishor: Journalists and TV people have come so many times to talk to us like this. But, what has happened to us? Our situation is just the same. A journalist printed Bikas's story in Kantipur. There was so much that was not true. Prabir does not want his step-mother to find out that he guards shoes for a living; but if our stories are printed in the papers she would find out. They [journalists] don't have the right to write whatever they want about our lives.

Many of the boys in this group were involved in a short play called *Jūdo Sadak* (Live Street) which was staged on August 20, 1994 on the occasion of Children's Day. The play also included a song (composed by the staff of EPHC) which included the following verses:

dog has become our friend, sack our bed,  
sons of the poor are obliged to become *khāte*,  
we are also citizens of this country, we are its hope,  
at this age we are made into *khāte* in despair.

When I asked them why they so willingly sang this song which calls them *khāte* as well, there was silence for a few seconds, and Shishir, the main singer in the play, explained:

Shishir: That was just a song. The heroes and heroines in the films do all sorts of things, but they are not for real. We were also acting in a play. We did just the way we were taught to do.

Then Pradeep added: But the song says 'sack is our bed'. Don't we sleep here on the sack? Sure. And it says 'dog is our friend'; dogs sleep with us here. It's only that we guard shoes and do not pick plastic.

LO: So are you saying that there are common things between you and *khātes*?

Many of them at once: Yes, yes. The only difference is the work.

Despite this acknowledgment of many similarities with the ragpickers, the street children and youth in Pashupati resent the *khāte* identity imposed upon them by the media, NGOs, and the general public. My interview with Rakesh and Umesh,<sup>22</sup> two boys who live on the street in the Pashupati area, also revealed this rejection of the *khāte* identity:

LO: Do you all call yourselves *khāte*?

Rakesh: No we don't.

LO: Who are the *khātes*?

Rakesh: The ones who pick plastic are called *khātes*.

LO: Only the ones who pick plastic? Not the ones who do other kinds of work?

Rakesh: Yes.

LO: So, is it only ragpicking work that has made them *khāte*?

Umesh: Some are like this. They have a different language. Some say 'lets go to snatch garlic [code word for aluminum goods]'. When they say this it is their language. They steal bread [code for cassette player]. Then ask each other 'how many do you have, one, two?' The people ask them how much they want for one; 'give me ten thousand only' they say. They sell stuff worth twenty thousand for only ten thousand. They make contacts beforehand. They make deals and force others to bail them out if they get caught. A friend of mine told me all this the other day.

LO: So are you saying that *khātes* also steal?

Umesh: Yes, the ones who steal are certainly *khātes*.

LO: Do people around here call you *khāte*?

Umesh: Some do.

LO: What kind of people call you *khāte*?

Rakesh: They don't call it here, but in other places, they do.

LO: What other places?

Rakesh: I mean when we get out of this Pashupati area. Then when people see us in dirty clothes they call us *khāte*

LO: How do you feel when they call you this?

Rakesh: I feel very bad. I get very angry.

---

22 Interviewed on February 18, 1995.

LO: Why is that?

Rakesh (very aggressively): *Khāte, khāte*. Do we go around picking plastic? We don't walk around picking anything. I get really mad when people walking on the street just call me *khāte*. I don't like to be called *khāte*.

The definition of *khāte* for the street children and youth in the Pashupati area is limited to working as ragpickers some of whom also steal. Although they too criminalize the *khātes*, these street boys admit that not all *khātes* are thieves, and smaller *khātes* are used by older boys who pickpocket for a living. They, however, reject the *khāte* identity and resent to be included in the same category because the dominant perception of the *khātes* in the society is that they are all scoundrels and criminals doing the "dirty job" (*phohor kām*) of ragpicking and "immoral work" (*narāmro kām*) of stealing. Even street children, especially ones between the ages of 13 and 16, who work as ragpickers try to hide their identity as *khātes*. According to Ashish, a former ragpicker whom I mentioned earlier in this paper, the word *khāte* was used by the ragpickers initially to hide their identity as ragpickers:

When we started calling ourselves *khāte*, it also became easier to explain to others; when others asked 'what do you do?' we would say '*khāte* work'. *Khātes* liked the word *khāte* because in India the ragpickers are called *kawāḍī*. When one says 'I do *kawāḍī* work' people view them negatively (*narāmrosamga hercha*). If someone asked me 'what kind of work do you do' and I said '*kawāḍī* work', he would look at me negatively. Therefore, if I said '*khāte* work', it would be a strange thing for them too and would be surprised to know that I do '*khāte* work'. Now '*khāte* work' has become \*famous\* [sic] as the plastic picking work. It was not like that then. The boys used to call their work *kawāḍī* before they changed it to *khāte kām*. But now everyone knows what *khāte kām* means—the plastic picking work. The boys want to act as if they don't pick plastic; we feel like that too. When we went to our home villages and said that we did '*khāte kām* ', we felt like we did some good work. Now if we say in our villages that we work as *khātes*, it would be very insulting (*narāmro huncha*).

Although the majority of the street children who ragpick for a living prefer this job to most of the other jobs they did as hotel boys, domestic servants, carpet weavers, and vehicle conductors, they dislike the *khāte* identity because it is socially degrading. Many of the ragpicking children I



knew who were fifteen and older (or those who were physically big) tried to work very early in the morning in order to avoid being seen doing this work. When they worked during daytime, they would either have a cap pulled down to their face, or avoid eye contact especially if an acquaintance happened to pass by. The ragpicking children, however, called each other *khāte*, and also had a sense of a collective identity as *khātes*. But they resented it when they were called *khātes* by outsiders as Ashish explained it to me:

LO: You all call each other *khāte* don't you?

Ashish: Because everyone has his own way of thinking, you know. When others call us *khātes*, it hurts. It feels like they look down (*hepeko*) on us. When we call ourselves *khāte* it doesn't feel that way. When others call us *khāte* it feels like they are calling us *khātes* because they have good jobs. For example, we are living in this hostel now. When we call each other *khāte* here it does not hurt, but if someone from our village comes and calls us *khāte*, it really hurts. Among ourselves it doesn't hurt, but when others call us *khātes* it feels like they look down on us, it feels wrong.

Many of the other boys in this hostel who had formerly worked as ragpickers and lived on the street also expressed resentment and anger at being called *khātes*. While most of them simply said that they felt angry and hurt (*ris uṭhcha ra citta dukhcha*), one boy remarked: "I feel very bad. It is like saying that I go around carrying a thousand people's filth (*juṭho*)."<sup>23</sup> The ragpicking children in other cities also call themselves *khāte* or *kawāḍī*. Many of the children, however, make efforts to hide their identity as *khātes* whenever possible. Sunil, a nine-year old ragpicker I knew in Hetauda, told me in May 1995 that he had hidden his sack in which he collected recyclable goods because "when we go around carrying our sack, people say 'the *khāte* is here', they beat us, and dogs chase us and bite us. We need the sack while working, but at other times we don't carry it, we hide it."

While the street children resent and resist the *khāte* identity, the NGOs, the media, and the general public continue to use, and thereby, establish this word as an undifferentiated category for all street children.

---

23 *Juṭho* not only means filth but also impurity based upon caste-based occupational hierarchies in which those at the bottom (such as sweepers) end up "carrying a thousand people's *juṭho*".

Gauri Pradhan, the founder of CWIN, attempts to give an overview of *khātes* and their problems in an article entitled "Khāte: The Street Survivors" based on CWIN's survey of 908 street children in Kathmandu between January and June 1993. Pradhan introduces the term *khāte* as "the ragpickers" (1993:3) but goes on to say the following:

As with street children throughout the world, Nepal's street kids too have devised their own language, the vocabulary of which expresses their own unique situation. Khāte is one such word. Originally meaning ragpicker, it has now come to mean all street kids, and the word has now slipped into the vocabulary of Nepalis through out the country. Everyone is familiar with the word through newspapers, stage, films, and so on, and it has now come to symbolize a group of people fighting for their very survival on the streets of our cities (Pradhan 1993:4).

CWIN adopted and utilized the term *khāte* in its publications and advocacy literature with the purpose of establishing it as a collective identity of the Nepali street children.<sup>24</sup> This echoes the trend in other developing countries to perpetuate a single term in the locally dominant language to represent all street children despite debates regarding problems such a generalizing category creates.

The generalized meaning of the term *khāte* is indeed prevalent in NGO publications and the media, and it has entered the vocabulary of the literate urban population in Nepal but not as Pradhan's narrative would suggest, because neither ragpickers nor other street children prefer this term of address by others. It is currently used interchangeably to refer to the work of ragpicking, the children who ragpick, and all kinds of street children including beggars, porters, street vendors, street performers, and those who pickpocket and steal (Joshi 2053 v.s.; Kunwar 1995b; Pradhan 1993). Among the street children, however, this term is popular only in Kathmandu where ragpicking children call themselves and their work *khāte*. Street children in Narayanghat are also familiar with the term *khāte* and the ragpicking children there identify themselves with it too. The street children who work as ragpickers in Hetauda, Butwal and Pokhara call themselves *kawāḍī* and their work *kawāḍī kām*.

Although the use of the term *khāte* by the NGOs and in the media has been generic, the popular conception of the *khāte* children in urban areas

---

<sup>24</sup> Gauri Pradhan's interview in the documentary called *Khāte* prepared by the Police Headquarters in 1993.

is still that of ragpickers who collect and sell recyclable goods such as plastic and metal, and sleep on the street. The image associated with a *khāte* child is one of a street boy<sup>25</sup> in dirty old clothes carrying a sack on his shoulder and a stick in his hand. In a play entitled *Saḍak* (Street), recently published in a Nepali literary magazine, two *khāte* boys appear briefly who remain nameless in the play and are referred to as "*khāte(a)*" and "*khāte(b)*" (Sapkota 2052 v.s.). A *khāte* boy telling his story of street living has recently appeared in a chapter on child rights in a Nepali school textbook for grade four (Thapa 2052 v.s.). The fact that this textbook chose a *khāte* child over children living in other deprived situations suggests that *khāte* has become a well established category in the eyes of the Nepali state and its urban elites. *Khāte* children have also become the subject of school going children's writings recently published in local newspapers which reflect their conceptions of the *khāte* children as poor, hungry, and pitiful but also dirty, dangerous, and social misfits (e.g. Luitel 1996; Prasain 1996; Rayamajhi 1996). Street children's pain (*pidā*, *vyathā*, *duḥkha*) has been another recurrent theme in Nepali poems by adults, children, and also street children or youth (e.g. Bhujel 1994; Khadka 1995; Rawal 1995; Thapa 1993; Thapa 1994). Issues of child rights and social injustice have also appeared in both children's (Jha 1994) and adults' (Shardul Bhattarai, 1993) writings about the *khātes*.

### POLITICS OF IDENTITIES

Different conceptions about the children who live or work on the street in urban Nepal have evolved over the years. While the street children were rendered caste beings by putting them into the *poḍe* category in the past, new forms of labeling (such as "children of the street", "children on the street", "*khāte*") have emerged more recently based upon the relationships with their families, their street-based lifestyles, and more importantly, their survival strategies and other activities. Although these labels follow a different logic, they have similar impacts on the street children's position in the society—they are marginalized and dehumanized.

The new forms of labeling the street children in Nepal have emerged from both global and local levels. The categories "children of the street" and "children on the street" that UNICEF originally formulated for the

---

25 The majority of the street children in Nepal who live on the street are boys between the ages of nine and sixteen. There are girls who do street-based jobs like vending and ragpicking but they are generally found to be living with their guardians.

street children in Latin American countries (Tacon 1985) have been perpetuated in other developing countries as well. The global circulation of such translocal categories and their uncritical importation and utilization by the local actors have enhanced the concept of childhood as a happy, carefree period in which children live with their families, go to school and play. These norms and standards valued in the developed countries and wealthy families everywhere are the premises defining the concept of childhood globalized today through the rhetoric of child rights. In such a context, children who do not comply to these values hence become classified into various categories such as working children, street children, jail children, children with disabilities, and poor children—representing "children in difficult circumstances or children-at-risk" that justify the intervention activities of the international, state, and local child development organizations.

Despite efforts towards conceptually universalizing Nepali street children, a more popular and established label—*khāte*—has originated from the street children themselves. Originally, the street children called themselves *khāte* for working as ragpickers and spending all their earnings on food and fun. This term has, however, taken on new meanings particularly for the NGOs, the media, and the public to include all street children. The generic use of the term *khāte* has made it easier for the NGOs, the police and the media to justify their programs as the population of children can be significantly increased under the broad and fluid category of *khāte*.

Today, the popular conception of *khāte* children is not limited to those whose work is ragpicking but also pickpocketing, stealing, harassing pedestrians, and intruding on the once-friendly public space of the street. The criminalizing of *khāte* children is linked with the transformation of the meaning of the public space in urban Nepal and the shift in moral values constituting "good" citizens, both of which are effected by socio-economic and cultural factors. Among other issues, new possibilities for subsistence in urban areas, the efforts of the dominant class to impose its morality onto other classes, and the state's project to define its "good citizens" are related to the transformations in the *khāte* identity.

Although it is not known when collecting recyclable goods became a subsistence possibility in the urban areas, its development is certainly linked with the rise in consumerism. As urban Nepal has been experiencing a distinct development of material culture, desiring, consuming, and owning certain commodities have become markers of identities and social status (see Liechty 1994). The rise of consumer

society has not only created new economic opportunities but also new identities and social categories. The *khāte* children are an example of such a social group in urban Nepal. The recyclable goods such as plastic, glass and metals are produced as waste from the commodities consumed by the dominant classes and tourists. While consumption practices are one of the common grounds upon which collective social identities of those at the higher rungs of the society are formed and consolidated, the identities of the *khāte* children are based upon utilizing this very waste or dirt (*phohor*) for subsistence. As new standards of public presentation based upon consumption and display have emerged among the urban dominant classes, the *khāte* children who live on what is dirt for the dominant classes have become offensive, embarrassing and dangerous.

The development of consumer-oriented society has also enhanced the development of both formal and informal economy in the urban areas. The subsistence strategies of the street children are almost always under the informal economy. The formal sector, however, has contributed to the creation of street children. A significant number of street children in Kathmandu have resorted to street life after having worked in carpet factories and restaurants. When the carpet factories became "inappropriate places for proper childhood" in the eyes of the state and the child rights advocacy groups led by the dominant classes in 1994, many of the working children hence displaced became street children.

The morality that guided this action of the state and the advocacy groups saw child labor as a social problem to be eliminated. This is a shift from the focus on children's work in the earlier decades when working children were valued morally and economically over those who begged, and work was recommended for the rehabilitation of child beggars (e.g. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare 1982; Okada and Rana 1973). Now when children's work has become a problem to be resolved, education has become the designated avenue for reform. School is viewed as the proper place for the development of "good citizens". Those not in school hence become potentially dangerous for their own future and for the society. It is, however, important to point out that the state and the dominant classes perceive certain categories of children to be potentially more dangerous than others. The discourse of child rights, development, and general social reform has so far revolved around rehabilitating child beggars, street children, and children working in carpet factories, although Nepali children are working and living in worse situations. The focus on these groups in particular is linked with the importance of tourism which necessitates self-objectification of Nepal and her people. In such a context,

the above three groups of children in particular become elements of "embarrassment" as their very existence in the public spaces, i.e., the streets, or the products of their labor in the international market (e.g. carpets) tarnish Nepal's image.

In the context where public presentation is a national concern, it is important to note that children working as domestic servants in the urban homes have not been targeted for social reform. CWIN's study shows that there are 10,652 domestic child workers in the three municipalities of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur (as opposed to 1500 street children), and an estimated 31,000 of them (as opposed to 5000 street children) in the 36 municipalities in the country (CWIN 1994:35). Although the figures generated for the domestic child servants are many times bigger than those for the street children, CWIN and other NGOs have targeted the street children, and not the domestic child servants, for rehabilitation. This suggests that one of the strategies of the politics of dominant class morality is the separation of the public from the private/home whereby public respectability holds weight whereas conditions within dominant class homes (where most of these domestic servants serve) remain beyond the realm of Nepali NGO activism. Hence, when street children, i.e. elements "offensive, embarrassing, and dangerous" to the dominant classes, become visible in the public sphere, they become "a social problem to be eliminated" through rehabilitation—a concept adopted by the child NGOs to mean processes of socializing the street children such that they follow the dominant norms and values and become integrated into the society. Rehabilitation in this sense has become a tool for homogenizing dominant class notion of childhood. And in practical terms this has meant taking children out of the street and putting them into institutions such as children's hostels and schools.

The focus on street children instead of domestic child servants also illustrates how the direction of state-led development and NGO-led advocacy work in Nepal is largely determined by the priorities of the donor organizations. The emphasis on creating "socially acceptable children" i.e., with "proper childhood", stems from the ideological and financial influence of the donor organizations on the NGOs. The NGOs have to present reality in stark terms to justify funding for their projects. They therefore tend to uncritically quote as well as manufacture numbers of their target groups even when the process leading to survey results and the reality of the concerned groups is much more fluid. The numbers used by the NGOs and the media regarding the population of street children in Nepal are prime examples of manufactured reality as the everyday lives of

the street children escape easy categorization. Furthermore, the NGOs adopt the universalizing concepts and the reform ideologies of the donor organizations uncritically to sustain themselves. One of the many consequences of the politics of generalized categorization is that it leads to generalized prescriptions under which reform projects can begin without substantial inquiry into the history that leads children to come to the streets.<sup>26</sup> This also means not caring for the specificities of the individual histories of the street children. Another aspect of making the street children publicly respectable citizens is the politics related to the history of dominant classes appointing themselves as the guardians of morality and *bikās*, and as the agents of reforms. In today's context where development has become a lucrative source for economic, symbolic and political capital, street children have been transformed into a site for development work of all sorts. While not all development work targeted for the street children has necessarily benefited them, the adults working in various capacities have certainly gained positively in terms of developing their occupational portfolios.

Amidst all the action and discourse on the street children and their rehabilitation, the street children's own voices are missing. Adults need to listen to the street children and involve them actively if an actor-based point of view and participatory social reform is to be sought. Many of the street children do not necessarily want to be "socialized"—i.e., return to their families, go to school, or work in an establishment. They reject the normalized notion of childhood that the child NGOs and the dominant classes (which represent the Nepali state) are imposing on them. This raises the question: whose sense of public respectability is punctured by the fact of children on the streets?

### Conclusion

Instead of summarizing the arguments I have made in this paper, I will suggest three general lessons this study has for future anthropological research on Nepal.

1) *Children as valuable subjects of anthropology*: My study suggests that children are valuable sources of information, and anthropologists can generate rich ethnography of current Nepali society if they put aside their

---

<sup>26</sup> See Onta and Baker 1995 for a discussion on the difficulties on teaching street children in non-formal education (NFE) programs at two different NGOs in Kathmandu where children with various levels of literacy and numeracy were all taught the same materials at the same time.

prejudices as adults and learn to listen to the children as capable cultural agents. Anthropologists of Nepal have, more often than not, relied on adult members of the Nepali society as informants and windows into Nepali cultural worlds. In so doing, they have touted the putative Nepali family as the site *par excellence* for the reproduction of cultural identities. As satellite television brings more of the so-called western culture into the homes of the members of the dominant classes of Nepal, they, in turn, have begun to redeploy their homogenized notion of the Nepali family as the site where "pure" Nepali culture remains supreme and *beyond* the cultural invasion of the west. Cleavages in these doubly essentialized notions of culture and family held by the scholars of Nepal and the members of its dominant classes begin to become visible through a focus on Nepali children such as the one presented here. Contrary to the popular conception of strong family values and relationships in Nepal, street children have left their homes primarily because of break down in their family support system, domestic violence, and parental neglect and abuse (Onta 1995). It is because of such negative experiences that many of the street children refuse to return to their families or be socialized into images of normalized childhood propagated by the NGOs and the Nepali state. These children, as full cultural actors, challenge the scholars of Nepal to not only rethink normalized notions of the Nepali family and culture but also of the fault lines that mark them.

2) *Class as anthropological subject*: My study suggests that anthropologists interested in social hierarchy in Nepal ought to be widening their domain of research. Even as some encouraging evidence to the contrary exists (e.g. Liechty 1994), anthropologists of Nepal continue to conceptualize hierarchy in Nepali society within a discourse of caste (e.g. Gellner and Quigley 1995). While caste continues to be a social fact of Nepali society, its logic is *no longer* the paramount determiner of national, cultural and social hierarchy in Nepal today. There is no doubt that members of the present day dominant classes in Nepal still use symbolic capital that their caste affiliations might provide them to exert their hegemony in Nepali society. However, their articulation with the international development regime, their locations within the key institutions of the Nepali state, their ability to adopt the language of universalized categories of development, and their access to foreign financial resources through governmental and non-governmental channels have now created a remarkable multi-tiered class society in Nepal. These factors have enabled the members of the dominant classes of Nepal to expand their occupational portfolios whereby reforming the members of



the dominated classes (e.g. "*khātes*") has now become a respectable profession within the governmental institutions such as the police and the NGOs. The interaction between the dominant and variously dominated classes is now largely determined by their respective wealth and the social capital and respectability associated with it. The politics of this class interaction can be observed in the development rhetoric of the Nepali state and the dominant classes-led NGOs and their various projects of reform or development. As scholars we now ought to attend to every and all domains of social interaction that might be windows through which we might get a better glimpse of the hierarchies in current Nepali society. This means we ought to not only talk to our putative "informants" from the dominant and dominated classes as "field" research, but also listen to what they are saying in the print-media (cf. Des Chene, this volume), on the stage, over the radio and television, and in textbooks.

3) *Urban Nepal, particularly Kathmandu, as anthropological subject:* When urban Nepal, particularly Kathmandu, has received attention from the anthropologists, more often than not, these studies have been propelled by the desire to locate "traditional" city culture of a by-gone era. The anthropological corpus on the Newars of Kathmandu is the best example of this tendency. My study suggests that much can be learned about the complexity and continuous transformations characterizing urban life in Nepal today if we move beyond caste and religion—topics that anthropologists have so far found fascinating in Nepal. I have discussed how the reforming focus on *khātes* and the absence of such a project with respect to child domestic workers who serve the homes of members of the dominant classes give us clues as to how the public space is being transformed within the new politics of class in urban Nepal. It is no coincidence that just when the desire for suburban, private and secure homes became hegemonic in the cultural worlds of Kathmandu's dominant classes that "street children" became a "problem" of development. Similar transformations of the public and the private within class politics—phenomena that substantially *alter* the texture of urban life in Nepal—have also been reported in other domains of urban life (cf. Liechty 1994; this volume). Moreover, the physical movement of those identified as street children within a single city or regions within Nepal ought to make us aware of how the transportation geography of the country makes it impossible for scholars to contain their "subjects" of study within any one given urban site. Anthropologists ought to begin to ask more detailed questions about these transformations in urban Nepali worlds and

think of innovative ways to overcome the limitations of their own disciplinary knowledge-hatching baskets.

### References

- Adhikari, Dharma. 2049 v.s. Durācār Maṇḍalmā Bhāsiekā Abodha 'Khāte' Nānīharu. *Sādhanā*, Māgh, 3(1): 6-28.
- Adhikari, Laxman. 2050 v.s. Upalabdhihīn Khāte Sammelan Samāpta: Sadakkā Asahāya Bālbālikā Budhdijīvīharuko Dollar Khāne Bhāḍo. *Mahānagar*, Asoj 28.
- Ankerson Jr., R. W. 1992. Street Kids Take the Stage. *The Independent*, August 19.
- Aseem, Manoj. 1994. Khāteharuko Kathā 'Sadak'. *Janamañc*, Sept. 29 - Oct. 5, p. 25.
- Banskota 2050 v.s. Sadak Bālbālikā Sammelan-2050. *Punarjagaran*, Kārtik 3.
- Bhattarai, Kusum. 2049 v.s. Khāte: Nepāli Śabdakoṣmā Jasko Sthān Chaina. *Sāptāhik Janamañc*, Sāun 22, 3(17):16.
- Bhattarai, Shardul. 1993. Kānchārāmko Sapana. *Prāchī*, December, 2(1).
- Bhattarai, Swastika. 1993. Māhanagarkā Anāgarikharulāi Niyāldā. *Kāntipur*, October 19.
- Bhikṣā Māgne (Niṣedh) Ain, 2018. In *Nepāl Ain Saṅgraha*. Khanda 9, 2041 v.s., pp. 42-45. Kathmandu: HMG Kanun Kitab Vyawastha Samiti, Ministry of Law and Justice.
- Bhujel, Manbahadur. 1994. Untitled poem. *Bālsarokār*, 4(18): 22.
- Bikal, Ramesh. 2025 v.s. Footpath Ministers. In *Euta Buḍho Violin Āsawariko Dhunmā*, pp. 24-37. Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan.
- Black, Maggie. 1991. *Philippines: Children of the Runaway Cities*. Innocenti Studies. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.
- CWC, The Committee for Working Children. 1992. *Street Children of Bangalore: A Situational Analysis*. A study conducted for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India and UNICEF. New Delhi: National Labour Institute.
- CWIN. 1989. Street Kids in Kathmandu. *Voice of Child Workers* 5/6: 12-15.
- CWIN. 1990. *Lost Childhood: Survey Research on Street Children of Kathmandu*. Kathmandu: Child Workers in Nepal.
- CWIN. 1994. Urban Domestic Child Labour in the Kathmandu Valley. *Voice of Child Workers*, 23: 34-40.

- CWS 1993. *Street Children: Our Failure*. Report of the Street Children's National Convention, October 11-13. Kathmandu: Child Welfare Society.
- Dhital, Rupa. 1991. 'Phohor ũpera gujārā garchāũ': Kāthmāndukā Khāte Bālbālikā. *Bālsarokār*, 1(2): 36-38.
- Gellner, David N. and Declan Quigley, eds. 1995. *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gorkhāpatra* 1994 v.s., Sāun 15. Editorial.
- Gorkhāpatra* 1999 v.s., Bhādra 17. Editorial.
- Gorkhāpatra* 2036 v.s., Aṣād 15. Article on children's work.
- Gorkhāpatra* 2050 v.s., Sāun 11. Article on street children in Brazil.
- Gorkhāpatra* 2050 v.s., Asoj 26. Sadak Bālakharuko Pratham Sammelan Śuru.
- Gorkhāpatra* 2050 v.s., Asoj 29. Sadak ta Chāḍne tara Ghar Khoi?
- Guragain, Gopal. 1993. Khāteharulāi Abhibhāwakkō Khāco Cha. *Deśāntar Sāptāhik*, October 17, p. 2.
- Guragain, Laxmi. 1993. Hāmro Mahānagarkā Anāgarikharu. *Gorkhāpatra*, November 20.
- International Child Year Committee Nepal. 1979. *International Child Year 1979: A Report*. Kathmandu: International Child Year Committee Nepal.
- Inter-NGO Programme on Street Children and Street Youth. 1985. *Forum on Street Children and Street Youth*. Grand Bassam, Ivory Coast: International Catholic Children's Bureau.
- Janmabhumi* 2050 v.s., Kārtik 1. Saḍakchāp Bālakharuko Sudhārkā Kurā.
- Jha, Daulat. 1994. Tiniharulāi Āja Mukti Cāhiekō Cha. *Bālsarokār*, 4(18): 25
- Joshi, Radhaprasad. 2053 v.s. Cor Baccāharu Nagad ra Sun nai Tākchan. *Gorkhāpatra*, Jetha 21, pp. 1 and 13.
- Kāntipur* 1993, October 12. Sadakkā Bālbālikāprati Rāṣṭriya Cāso Āwaśyak. p. 1.
- Kāntipur* 1995, March 17. Khāteharuko Jīwanśailī ũelicitramā.
- Kāntipur* 1995, March 22. Khāteharuko Jīwanbritimā 'Mukti'. p. 2.
- Kāntipur* 1995, April 29. An advertisement of the film *Sadak*. p. 8.
- K.C., Bidur. 2036 v.s. Bālsramko Śoṣaṇbāta Samrakṣaṇ. *Nepāl (Antaraṣṭriya Bālbarṣa Viśeṣāṅka 1979)*, pp. 44-47.
- Khadka, Rudrabahadur. 1995. Khāteko Pidā. *Kāntipur*, October 7.

- Kunwar, Basant. 1995a. Sadak Bālbālikāharuko Lāgi Biṣeṣ Kāryakram. A plan of action presented at Children-at-Risk Network Group. February 28.
- Kunwar, Basant. 1995b. Saḍak Bālbālikā Nāyakhbandā Khalanāyak Rucaūchan. *Kāntipur*, October 14.
- Liechty, Mark. 1994. Fashioning Modernity in Kathmandu: Mass Media, Consumer Culture, and the Middle Class in Kathmandu. Ph. D. disst., University of Pennsylvania.
- Luitel, Manju. 1996, February 24. Khāte (a poem). *Gorkhāpatra (Bāl Jagat)*.
- Lumbini* 2050 v.s., Asoj 17. Khāteko Nāmmā Dollarko Kheti: Sarwahara Khātehāruko Utthān Kahile?
- Mahānagar* 2050 v.s., Asoj 26. Kukursaṅga Sutneharuko Sammelan Śuru.
- Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. 2039 v.s. *Bāl Maganteko Sambhavyatā Adhyayan Prativedan*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.
- Nag, M., B. N. F. White & R. C. Poet. 1978. An Anthropological Approach to the Study of the Economic Value of Children in Java and Nepal. *Current Anthropology* 19(2): 293-306.
- Nayā Pusta* 1994, July. 'Khāte' Bālbālikāharuko 'Saḍak'. 1(1): 36.
- NCSD, National Council of Social Development Foundations. 1989. *Report on Street Children*. Manila: NCSD.
- Nepāl Times* 2050 v.s., Asoj 30. Hāmi Bālak Kahāko?
- New Era 1983. *An Evaluative Study of the Nepal Children's Organization*. Submitted to the Evaluation Committee, Nepal Children's Organization. Kathmandu: New Era.
- Okada, Ferdinand E. and Nirmal Shumshere Rana 1973. *The Child Beggars of Kathmandu*. Department of Local Development/UNICEF. Research-cum-Action Project Paper No. 2.
- Onta, Lazima. 1995. *Situation Analysis of Street Children in Nepal*. Report submitted to: the Child Welfare Society for UNICEF-Nepal.
- Onta, Lazima and Rachel Baker. 1995. *Non-Formal Education for the Street Children in Kathmandu: A Report of Our Teaching Experiences*. Occasional Paper I. Kathmandu: Child Welfare Society.
- Pradhan, Gauri. 1993. Khāte: The Street Survivors. *Voice of Child Workers* 19/20: 3-14.
- Prasain, Rajendra. 1996. Khāteharuko Durdaśa. *Viśwamitra (Bāl-Jagat)* 2(9/10): 56.

- Rawal, Purna. 1995. Khātelāi. *Bālsarokār* 5(22): 35.
- Rayamajhi, Udip. 1996. Street Children of Kathmandu. *The Kathmandu Post (School Side)*, January 21.
- Rizzini, Irene, Irma Rizzini, Monica Munhoz, and Lidia Galeano. 1992. *Childhood and Urban Poverty in Brazil: Street and Working Children and Their Families*. Innocenti Occasional Papers. The Urban Child Series, Number 3. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.
- Sapkota, Gopi. 2052 v.s. Sadak. *Samakālīn Sāhitya* 5(20): 175-185.
- Singh, Shanker M. 1993. Children Without Childhood. *The Kathmandu Post*, October 11, p. 4.
- Sunday Despatch*. 1993, October 17. Future Stars are Already Shining. pp. 1-2.
- Tacon, Peter. 1985. A Unicef Response to the Needs of Abandoned and Street Children. Submitted to UNICEF, Geneva. Unpublished ms.
- Thapa, Gopal. 1993. Duhkhi Bālakko Bilaunā. *Bālsarokār* 2(11): 26.
- Thapa, Jitbahadur. 2052 v.s. Bāl Adhikār. In *Mero Deś*. Harishankar Manandhar, ed., pp. 121-128. Sano thimi, Bhaktapur: HMG Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare.
- Thapa, Poonam. 1994. Khāteko Vyathā. *Bālsarokār* 4(18): 17.
- The Kathmandu Post*. 1993, October 11. Street Children. Editorial. p. 4.
- The Kathmandu Post*. 1994, September 9. Article on street children in India.
- The Rising Nepal*. 1993, August 6. Article on Columbian street children.
- The Rising Nepal*. 1993, September 24. An advertisement of the Street Children's National Convention organized by the Child Welfare Society.
- UCEP. 1979. *A Case Study of Working Children Aged 8-14 Years in the Kathmandu Valley*. Undertaken by Consulting Management Engineers for Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme.
- Wasti, Prakash. 2036 v.s. Kāthmāṇḍu Upatyakā ra Bālduracār: Ek Adhyayan, Ek Bīśleṣan. In the proceedings of the seminar *Nepālmā Bālbālikāko Kānunī Samrakṣaṇ* organized on the occasion of the International Year of the Child. Kathmandu: Nepal Committee on the International Year of the Child 1979, Tribhuvan University, and Legal Studies Institute.
- Wright, James D. 1989. Address Unknown: Homelessness in Contemporary America. *Society* 26(6): 45-53.